

TAKING A STAND *for the* BIBLE

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INTRODUCTION

The Bible is the world's best-selling and most influential book. Abraham Lincoln called it "the best gift God has given to man." Patrick Henry said, "It is worth all other books which were ever printed." Noted British statesman William Gladstone wrote that "an immeasurable distance separates it from all competitors" while the famous philosopher Immanuel Kant declared, "The Bible is the greatest benefit which the human race has ever experienced." A.M. Sullivan observed, "The cynic who ignores, ridicules, or denies the Bible, spurning its spiritual rewards and aesthetic excitement, contributes to his own moral anemia."¹

But why should we honor the Bible? Because of the Bible's *impact*. Humans share a universal desire to seek God, because apart from God life ultimately lacks lasting meaning and purpose. In response, the Bible claims to be the revealed Word of God (John 1:12-13; 1 John 5:9-15). Its words communicate how we can have a personal relationship with God (John 3:16; 17:3). If the Bible's words are true, then in its pages we can find ultimate meaning for our lives and the God we seek. We can read of his supernatural and loving actions among people and nations in the Old Testament. We can experience his love and redemption through Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

However, many people do not believe there is one true God, and they deny that God has personally revealed himself through the

Bible. Some of these arguments derive from the theories of skeptical scholarship, which has produced volumes of works attacking the perspective that the Bible provides an accurate account of God's intervention and plans for human history. Yet even the most devout skeptics cannot deny the Bible's influence in history and its impact upon millions of lives around the globe.

The topics addressed in *Taking a Stand for the Bible* are vital because if solid evidence exists that the Bible is composed of accurately revealed words from God, its critics are promoting inaccurate information. If the Bible's words are true, such skeptics ultimately mislead those who listen to them. If the Bible alone is divine revelation, then by definition it is the most important book in the world, and it deserves to be recognized as what it claims to be: the guidebook for our lives on all matters of faith.

To take a stand for the Bible means we believe that all of what the Bible teaches is reliable. Its core message teaches that the one true God sent his only Son Jesus to die for our sins so men and women could inherit eternal life as a free gift by simply placing their faith in Christ and becoming one of his followers (John 3:16; Romans 3:22-26). Such a claim is phenomenal in its uniqueness and compassion. If skeptics are given only one reason to objectively examine the claims of the Bible, this alone should be sufficient, because if these claims are true, then God freely offers us more than we could ever imagine.

If the Bible is truly God's Word to us, and if we reject its message of salvation, then no other personal decision we make will be more consequential. None of us can ignore the issue of the reliability of the Bible—not merely its historical reliability but the answer to the question, What if it *is* true?

Our goal is that those who already follow Christ will be encouraged in their faith and that the undecided will be challenged to investigate the Bible more deeply—to read it, reflect upon its message, and ultimately to accept its claims. We share the desire of the apostle Paul, who wrote, “We...thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it

not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe” (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

Join in the journey of a lifetime that will impact your life today—and your eternity—as we share together in *Taking a Stand for the Bible!*



PART ONE:

How Did We Get the Bible?



THE UNIQUENESS OF THE BIBLE: *What Makes It So Special?*

Is the Bible really the most unique book in the world? What makes it special among all other writings throughout history? The facts of the Bible cannot be explained solely by human theories concerning its origin. The Bible itself claims that it is unique among all books and is God's Word to humanity. The God of Scripture has revealed himself as a God of truth, so errors in the original manuscripts of the Bible's books would prove that God was not their author.

In fact, some would argue that because no other religion offers genuine evidence for belief in their deity or gods, apart from the Bible we are forced to remain agnostic about God. He might exist, but beyond hints of God based on the complexity of the universe around us, we would know little about who God is. In this chapter, we'll discuss seven key concepts for understanding what sets the Bible apart as unique from other books or spiritual writings throughout history.

1. The Bible Claims to Be Inspired by God

The Bible claims to be the inspired Word of God. We may argue that it is not, but first we must come to grips with the fact that it claims this for itself. When we speak, our words can be said to be the product of our breath. In the Bible, the words from God are

said to be God-breathed. The apostle Paul wrote that “all Scripture is God-breathed [Greek, *theopneustos*] and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

The theologian Benjamin Warfield made this observation about these verses:

The Greek term has, however, nothing to say of inspiring or of inspiration: it speaks only of a “spiring” or “spiration.” What it says of Scripture is, not that it is “breathed into by God” or is the product of the Divine “inbreathing” into its human authors, but that it is breathed out by God, “God-breathed,” the product of the creative breath of God. In a word, what is declared by this fundamental passage is simply that the Scriptures are a Divine product, without any indication of how God has operated in producing them. No term could have been chosen, however, which would have more emphatically asserted the Divine production of Scripture than that which is here employed.¹

What is the meaning of biblical inspiration? Biblical inspiration is...

- *Verbal*: extending to the very words, not just the ideas, of Scripture.

Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God’” (Matthew 4:4).

- *Plenary*: extending equally to every part of Scripture.

“I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished” (Matthew 5:18).

- *Clear*: sometimes called “perspicuous,” meaning sufficiently clear for the average person to understand without scholarly or technical training.

“The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy,
making wise the simple” (Psalm 19:7).

Directly or indirectly, the Bible claims or implies divine inspiration on numerous occasions. Here are several examples:

This word came to Jeremiah from the LORD: “Take a scroll and write on it all the words I have spoken to you concerning Israel, Judah and all the other nations from the time I began speaking to you in the reign of Josiah till now” (Jeremiah 36:1-2).

Prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:21).

I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it... whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say (John 12:49-50).

The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show his servants what must soon take place (Revelation 1:1).

In addition, we find an abundance of references throughout the Bible that prophets spoke “the word of the LORD.” For example:

In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways (Hebrews 1:1).

The word of the LORD that came to Hosea...(Hosea 1:1).

The word of the LORD came to Ezekiel...(Ezekiel 1:3).

Moses then wrote down everything the LORD had said (Exodus 24:4; see also 31:24).

...you should remember the words spoken beforehand by

the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles...[Our] beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you... letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do the rest of the Scriptures (2 Peter 3:2,15-16 NASB).

From these and many other similar references found throughout the Bible, we can clearly illustrate that the Bible repeatedly claims to be inspired from God. This alone does not prove that its words are inspired, but it does reveal what the Bible claims for itself.

2. The Bible Is Powerful

The Old Testament prophet Jeremiah quoted these words from God: “‘Is not my word like fire,’ declares the LORD, ‘And like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?’” (Jeremiah 23:29). If the Bible is the Word of God, it is the most important work of literature on the planet. It is important for both what it says and what it does. Other statements in Scripture echo this same principle:

[God said] “My word that goes out from my mouth...will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:11).

The word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart (Hebrews 4:12).

Because of the Bible’s divine nature, ignorance of it can have a spiritually negative impact on our lives. Its information divinely strengthens our lives; likewise, being unaware of its information weakens our lives. As Jesus told the hypocritical religious leaders of his day, “You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God” (Matthew 22:29).

Interesting Facts about the Bible

The Bible is the world's best-selling and most translated book, but what is it?

Books in the Bible:	66
Books in the Old Testament:	39
Books in the New Testament:	27
Shortest book in the Bible:	2 John
Longest book in the Bible:	Psalms
Chapters in the Bible:	1189
Chapters in the Old Testament:	929
Chapters in the New Testament:	260
Middle chapter of the Bible:	Psalm 117
Shortest chapter in the Bible:	Psalm 117
Longest chapter in the Bible:	Psalm 119
Verses in the Bible:	31,173
Verses in the Old Testament:	23,214
Verses in the New Testament:	7,959
Shortest verse in the Bible:	John 11:35
Longest verse in the Bible:	Esther 8:9
Words in the Bible:	773,692
Words in the Old Testament:	592,439
Words in the New Testament:	181,253 ²

3. The Bible Communicates Its Own Authority

In multiple places and a myriad of ways, the pages of the Bible communicate it is a book of authority for all to follow. We can observe this pattern clearly throughout the Old Testament, the Gospels, and the rest of the New Testament.

The Old Testament

The Old Testament, covering the period from the creation of humanity to the 400s B.C., offers a consistent and strong stance that its words are revelation from God.

Eternal—These words will stand forever

- Isaiah 40:8: “The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever.”
- Psalm 119:89: “Your word, O LORD, is eternal; it stands firm in the heavens.”
- Psalm 138:2: “I will bow down toward your holy temple and will praise your name for your love and your faithfulness, for you have exalted above all things your name and your word.”

Perfect and Trustworthy—These words will be tested

- Proverbs 30:5-6: “Every word of God is flawless; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Do not add to his words, or he will rebuke you and prove you a liar.”
- Psalm 12:6: “The words of the LORD are flawless, like silver refined in a furnace of clay, purified seven times.”
- Psalm 18:30: “As for God, his way is perfect; the word of the LORD is flawless. He is a shield for all who take refuge in him.”
- Psalm 19:7,9: “The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul...the ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous.”

True—These words are true words

- Psalm 119:43,142,151,160: “The word of truth...your law is true...all your commandments are true...All your words are true; all your righteous laws are eternal.”

Holy and Righteous—These words have been set apart for God’s use

- Psalm 105:42: “He remembered his holy promise given to his servant Abraham.”

- Psalm 119:123: “My eyes fail, looking for your salvation, looking for your righteous promise.”
- Psalm 119:140: “Your promises have been thoroughly tested, and your servant loves them.”

Good—These words can bring God’s goodness to our lives

- Jeremiah 33:14: “I will fulfill the gracious promise I made...”

Vital—These words bring people into a vital relationship with God

- Isaiah 59:21: “‘As for me, this is my covenant with them,’ says the LORD. ‘My Spirit, who is on you, and my words that I have put in your mouth will not depart from your mouth, or from the mouths of your children, or from the mouths of their descendants from this time on and forever,’ says the LORD.”

Jesus Christ and the Gospels

Jesus, who claimed to be the Son of God, added his authority to the words of the Bible as well:

Eternal—Jesus’ words will never pass away

- Matthew 24:35: “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.”

Trustworthy—Jesus taught that you can believe the Bible is God’s Word

- Matthew 5:18: “I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.”

- John 5:47: “Since you do not believe what he [Moses] wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?”
- John 10:35: “...the Scripture cannot be broken.”
- John 12:49-50: “I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it. I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say.”
- John 17:8: “I gave them the words you gave me...”
- Luke 16:17: “It is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the least stroke of a pen to drop out of the Law.”

True—Jesus taught the truths of the Bible will purify your life

- John 17:17: “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.”

Holy—Jesus said His teaching was God’s teaching

- John 7:16: “My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me.”

Vital—Jesus said to follow Scripture if you truly want to live

- Matthew 4:4: “Jesus answered, ‘It is written: “Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.”’”

The Rest of the New Testament

It is important to note that Jesus’ followers held a consistent view with the words spoken by Jesus in the Gospels. They, too, considered the Old Testament God’s Word, in addition to the writings of the apostles:

Eternal—God’s Word will last for eternity

- 1 Peter 1:25: “The word of the Lord stands forever. And this is the word that was preached to you.”

Inspired—The Bible is an extension of God himself

- 2 Timothy 3:16-17: “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”
- 2 Peter 1:20-21: “...no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”
- 2 Peter 3:2,15-16: “I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles...Bear in mind that our Lord’s patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.” (This passage shows the inspiration of the New Testament.)

Living and Active—The Bible is powerful for our lives

- Hebrews 4:12: “The word of God is living and active...”
- 1 Peter 1:23: “You have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.”

True—The Bible provides accurate information concerning key areas of life

- 2 Timothy 2:15: “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”

Supernatural—The Bible is divine in its origin

- 1 Thessalonians 2:13: “We also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.”
- 1 Thessalonians 4:8: “...he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit.”

Holy—God’s Word is set apart as special from all other writings

- 2 Timothy 3:15: “...from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures.”

Vital—The Bible is essential to our lives

- Revelation 22:18-19: “I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.”
- 1 Corinthians 2:12-13: “We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us...in words taught by the Spirit.”

- Romans 3:2: "...they have been entrusted with the very words [Greek: *logia*] of God."

The Character of God and the Inerrancy of Scripture

- Sovereign: A sovereign God is able to preserve the process of inspiration from error.
- Righteousness: A righteous God would never inspire error.
- Just: A just God could not lie when asserting that his word is perfect or without error. He would be unjust if he called error-filled Scripture "holy and true."
- Love: A loving God would adequately provide for the spiritual health and safety of his people by inspiring Scripture.
- Eternal: An eternal God has had eternity to plan for his perfect word.
- Omniscient: An all-knowing God knows every contingency that might arise to make his words flawed.
- Omnipotent: An all-powerful God can effectively respond to every contingency and also preserve the transmission of his Word.
- Omnipresent: A God who is everywhere at all times can reveal and inspire his word because all factors are within his sight and control.
- Truthful: A truthful God would not lie when he speaks concerning his words.
- Merciful: A merciful God would not trick people by stating his word is perfect if it is not.
- Personal: A personal God can inspire verbally, the words he gives, to ensure effective communication.

4. The Bible Is Unique in Its Teachings and Details

No other book in history compares to the unique combination of spiritual teachings and details of accuracy as provided in the Bible. For instance:

- The Bible is the only book that offers objective evidence to be the Word of God, offering real proof of its divine inspiration.

- The Bible is the only religious Scripture in the world that can logically be considered without errors in its original copies.
- The Bible is the only ancient book with documented scientific and medical prevision. In fact, many modern books have been written on the theme of the Bible and modern science.
- The Bible is the only religious Scripture that offers eternal salvation as a free gift entirely by God's grace and mercy.
- The Bible is the only ancient religious Scripture whose complete text has been preserved with such an extreme level of accuracy.
- Only the Bible describes the creation of the universe by God from outside space and time and then gives a continuous historical record from the first man, Adam, to the end of history.
- Only the Bible contains detailed prophecies about the coming Savior of the world and whose prophecies have proven true in history.
- Only the Bible has unique theological content that includes the Trinity (that God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), the sinful nature of humanity, and the physical resurrection of Jesus from death.
- Only the Bible offers a realistic and permanent remedy for the problem of human sin and evil.
- Only the Bible has its accuracy confirmed in history, archaeology, and other sciences.
- The internal and historical characteristics of the Bible are unique in its unity and internal consistency despite production over a 1500-year period by 40-plus authors in three languages on three continents discussing scores of controversial subjects yet having agreement on all issues.

- The Bible is the most translated, purchased, and persecuted book in history.
- Only the Bible is fully one-quarter prophetic, containing a total of some 400 complete pages of predictions.
- Only the Bible has withstood 2000 years of intense scrutiny by critics, not only surviving the attacks but prospering and having its credibility strengthened by such criticism.
- The Bible has molded the history of Western civilization more than any other book and achieved worldwide influence.
- Only the Bible has a person-specific (Christ-centered) focus for each of its 66 books, detailing Christ's life in prophecy 400-1500 years before his birth on earth.
- Only the Bible proclaims a resurrection of its central figure that is proven in history.

5. The Bible Is Unique in Its Straightforward Interpretation

The Bible declares that it is our responsibility to interpret the Bible accurately. The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). The reason that members of alternative religious movements misinterpret the Bible is often because they have not studied or properly applied the principles for correctly interpreting a historical document like the Bible. John Ankerberg and John Weldon’s reference work *Encyclopedia of Cults and New Religions* documents numerous examples of how cults and other religious groups misinterpret the Bible by failing to adhere to accepted rules of textual interpretation for literature.³

In order to approach the Word of God correctly, we must become familiar with the basic principles of interpretation, such as that the Bible is generally to be interpreted normally or literally. There is

no justification for coming to the text to interpret all of its words mystically or symbolically, or through the alleged insights of so-called higher consciousness or alleged new divine revelations that contradict the Bible's earlier revelation. To interpret the Bible normally means attention must be paid to what the authors *originally intended*, what the words they wrote meant to them in their linguistic and historical context. The point is to discover the writer's intent. This meaning is fixed by the author and is not open to our own personal interpretations or bias. Our goal must be to understand the text in its context before we seek to apply its meaning to our lives today.

Bible verses can often be better understood with reference to the original languages of Scripture—Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic—including word meanings and grammar. Comparing similar or parallel passages relevant to the particular verse or topic is also important. Bible verses must be interpreted both in their immediate and larger context. This may require some understanding of the author, and the general historical context, such as the time period in which the particular Bible book was written. Just as it would not be wise to interpret a single sentence in a magazine article by itself, but in the context of the entire article, we would also be wise to interpret verses from the Bible within their larger contexts.

Understanding the literary genre of a passage is also important. For example, we interpret the parables of Jesus in a different way than we do the historical accounts in the book of Acts. In addition, because the Bible is a compilation of progressive revelation (meaning more information is revealed over time), the Old Testament sometimes needs to be text-interpreted based on later teachings in the New Testament. Another helpful principle is to interpret unclear portions of the Bible with help from clearer portions. That's because the Bible's teachings, if perfect, must be consistent with one another.

If we respect the Bible as the Word of God, apply proper interpretive principles, and depend upon the Holy Spirit to help us interpret and apply it properly, our reverent study will bring great rewards. It

will also astonish us how the message of the Bible is consistent with itself from beginning to end.

6. Jesus' View of the Bible

Some religious groups argue that the Bible has become corrupted during the history of the church or claim to have received new revelations that correct or complete the Bible. But what such groups ultimately fail to do is to honor the words of Jesus, whom they claim to revere.

Jesus said plainly, without any reservations, that, “Your word is truth” (John 17:17). He said that heaven and earth would pass away but that his words would never pass away (Matthew 24:35). In John 14:26 he promised the disciples that the Holy Spirit would teach them all things and bring to remembrance the things Jesus had taught them. He taught that the Holy Spirit, whom he would send, would guide the disciples into all truth (John 16:13). By doing so, he alluded to the inspiration and inerrancy of the New Testament before it was even written.

Clearly, Jesus did not believe that the Holy Spirit, whom he called “the Spirit of truth” (John 14:17), would corrupt his own words or inspire error. As the Son of God, Jesus was a perfect and reliable authority. As the only person in history to resurrect himself from the dead (John 2:19), his view of Scripture holds precedence over what anyone else says.

7. The Bible Is Proven Reliable Historically

We will discuss this seventh point in greater detail in parts two and three of this book, but it is worth mentioning here that the Bible is unique based on its proven historical reliability. Archaeologists have discovered over 25,000 places or facts consistent with the historical locations and times cited in the Bible. Names of kings and queens and time lines of history, wars, and kingdoms have been proven consistent with biblical teachings time and time again,

leading many skeptics to ultimately regard the Bible as a helpful resource in researching ancient history.

The Bible is not just one book; it is a 66-book anthology produced over multiple generations, yet reliable to the smallest detail. In our next chapter, we'll step beyond the uniqueness of the Bible to take a look at how the Bible's books were collected together into the one volume we enjoy today. As we do, we'll discover God's hand at work in both the writing of the Bible and in its continued compilation and translation from ancient scrolls to the digital world of our time.